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AUG 97

**INTERNAL DEVICES** PART 4 OF 4

# STARMAN



## DARK KNIGHTS

ROBINSON • HARRIS • BUCKINGHAM • VON GRAWBADGER





IT TOOK A DAY  
TO FIND HIM.

AND A LOT  
OF MANPOWER  
AND TEARS.

ASH FILLED THE AIR  
AROUND THEM AS  
THEY HAULED AND  
HEAVED. ALONG THE  
WAY THEY FOUND THE  
BODIES OF OTHER  
POOR  
UNFORTUNATES.

THEY FOUND AN ELDERLY  
WOMAN WHO LIVED. SOME  
HARD TIMBER HAD FALLEN  
ACROSS HER IN SUCH A  
WAY THAT IT HAD NOT  
CRUSHED HER FRAIL  
FORM, BUT RATHER IT  
PROTECTED HER FROM  
FURTHER HARM.

UPON LEARNING THE EXTENT OF THE  
DEATHS THAT DAY, SHE CRIED AND  
CURSED THE GOD ABOVE, THAT SHE,  
SO OLD, SHOULD HAVE LIVED WHEN  
OTHERS, YOUNGER AND WITH MORE OF  
THE FUTURE THEIRS, HAD PERISHED.

THE MEN WHO HUNTED THEN WORKED  
ON, WITH DAY BECOMING NIGHT.

AND AS THEY PREPARED TO GIVE UP  
FOR REST, SO THEY CAME UPON HIM.

THEY THOUGHT  
HIM DEAD.  
LONG DEAD.

BUT NO, A FAINT  
PULSE AND A  
FLICKER OF CLOSED  
EYES TOLD THEM  
OTHERWISE.

GRUNDY  
LIVED.

JUST.



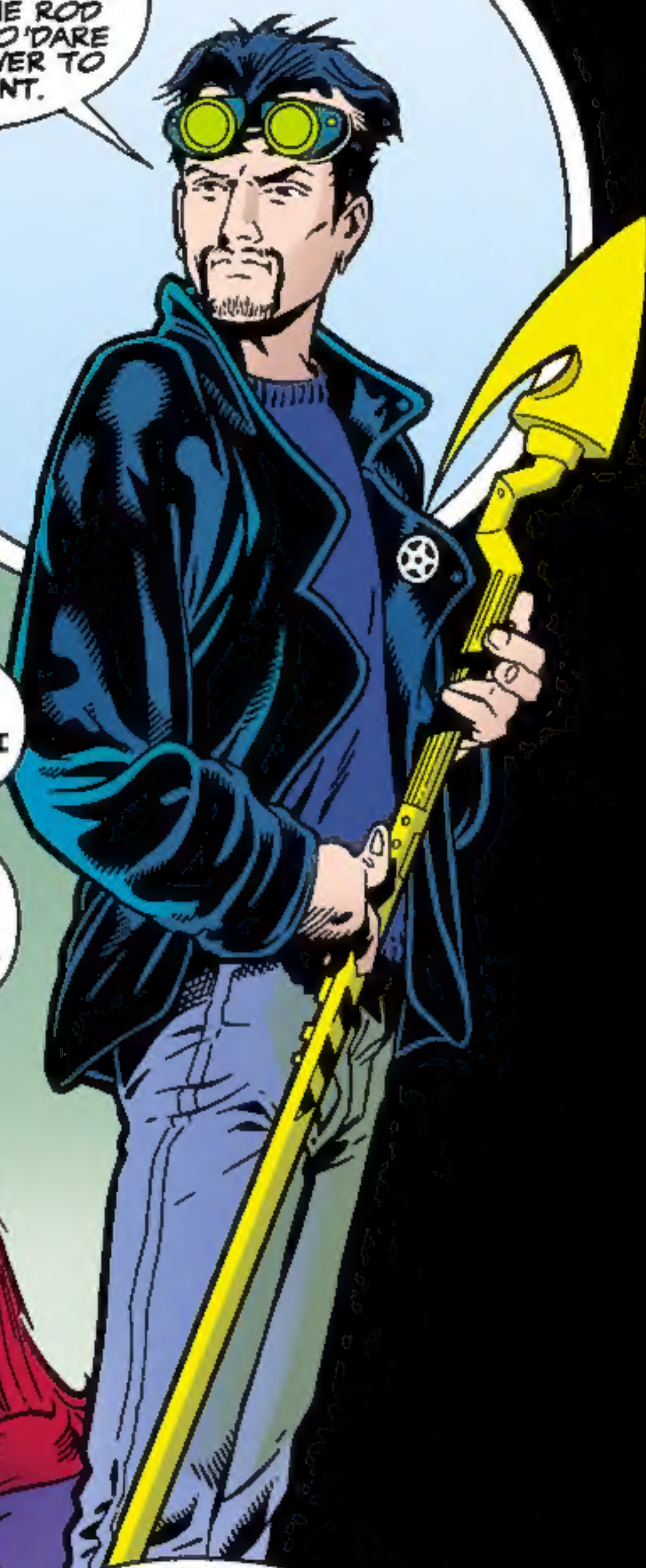


FEEL BETTER  
SINCE I SHOWERED  
AND PUT ON FRESH  
DUDS.

I  
BET.

YOU GOT  
YOUR ROD  
BACK.

THE COPS  
RAIDED DR. PIP'S  
HIDEOUT, WHERE I  
FOUGHT COPPERHEAD.  
THEY FOUND THE ROD  
THERE. BARRY O'DARE  
BROUGHT IT OVER TO  
MY APARTMENT.



WHAT  
ABOUT DR.  
PIP?

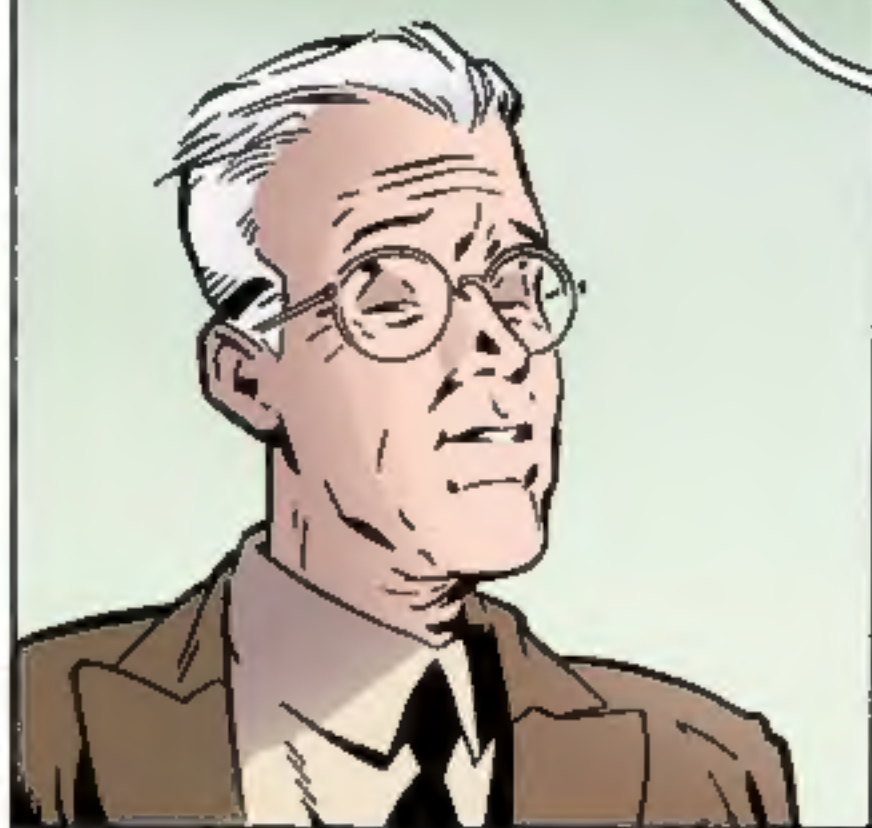
HARD TO SAY.  
THE LAST I SAW HIM  
HE WAS UNCONSCIOUS  
CLOSE TO THE BOMB.  
THAT AREA WAS PRETTY  
DECIMATED. I KNOW  
THE RULE ABOUT "IF THE  
BODY ISN'T THERE, THEN  
DON'T COUNT THE  
VILLAIN OUT..."

...STILL,  
HE'D HAVE TO  
BE DAMNED  
GOOD TO  
HAVE GOTTEN  
AWAY.

AND WHAT  
ABOUT THE  
PIRATE  
GHOST?

JON VALOR.  
HE ALERTED  
CLARENCE OF  
THE BOMB, BUT I  
HAVEN'T SEEN  
HIM SINCE.

I  
WILL, THOUGH.  
HE WANTS ME  
TO DO SOME-  
THING FOR HIM.  
HE'LL BE  
BACK.



YEAH,  
BUT LAST I  
HEARD, HOPE O'DARE WAS  
ON IT. SHE MAY HAVE PLUG  
SOMETHING UP. ANYWAY I DIDN'T  
COME HERE TO GIVE YOU A  
BLOW BY BLOW. IT'S ME WHO  
WANTS THE UPDATE.

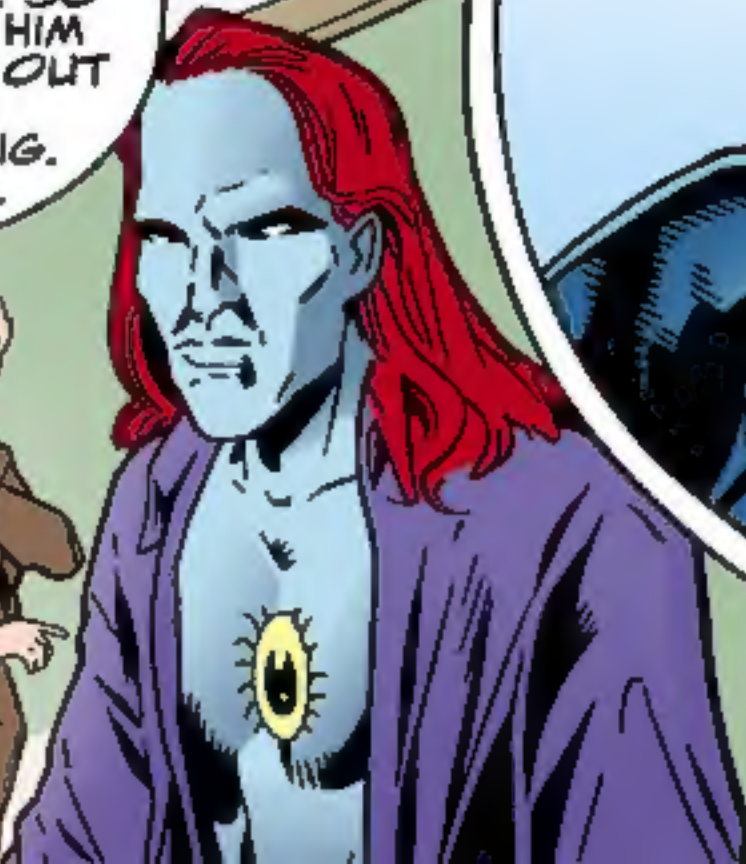
GRUNDY.  
HOW IS  
HE?



COPPERHEAD?

HE  
SLUNK AWAY  
BEFORE THE BOMB  
BLEW. HE'S OUT  
THERE. BUT HE WAS  
HIRED MUSCLE, SO  
I DON'T SEE HIM  
COMING AT ME OUT  
OF SOME  
VENDETTA GIG.  
HE'S GONE.

PIP'S  
MOTIVE IS  
STILL A  
MYSTERY?



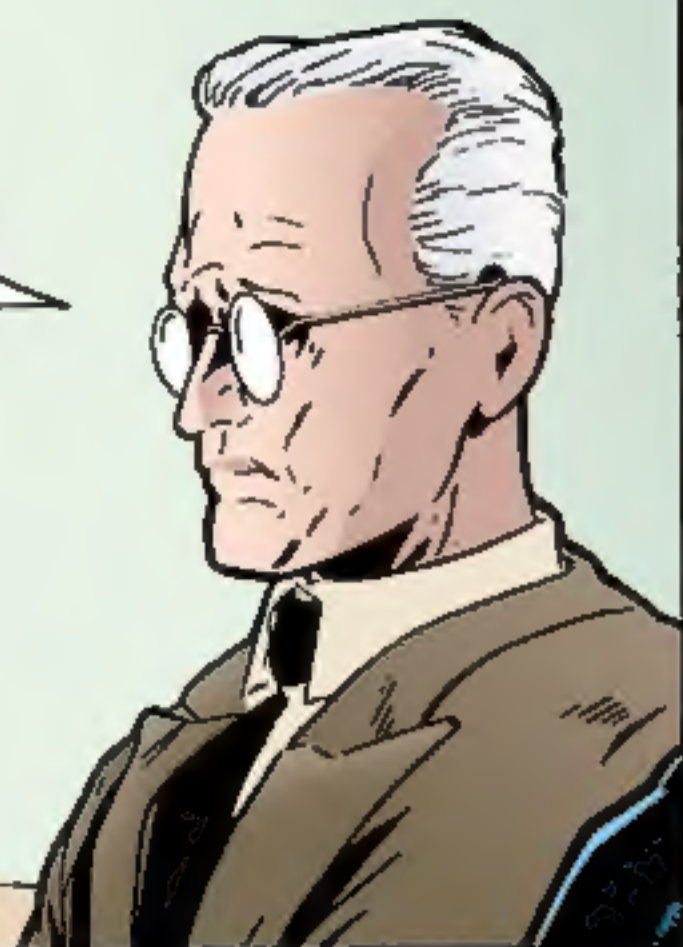


HOW HE IS, IS HOW HE'S ALWAYS BEEN, SON. SOMEWHAT OF A MYSTERY. HE'S A CREATURE CREATED FROM THE OOZE OF THE SWAMP. A MIXTURE OF VEGETATION AND DEAD MATTER.

HOW IS HE? HE'S DYING. HOW CAN WE HELP HIM? I DON'T KNOW.

HE MUST HAVE HEARD ME TALKING TO HIM, THAT DAY WHEN I CAME TO THE HOSPITAL. I THOUGHT HE WAS UNCONSCIOUS.

I TOLD HIM MY MISGIVINGS ABOUT HIM...THE FACT THAT A PAST INCARNATION HAD MURDERED SYLVESTER PEMBERTON. HE MUST HAVE HEARD THIS AND VANISHED, WAITING UNTIL A TIME CAME HE COULD REDEEM HIMSELF IN MY EYES.



HAVE YOU SEEN THE NEWS REPORTS?

YES, THE CAMERAMAN CAUGHT GRUNDY'S LAST SPOKEN WORDS.

POWERFUL STUFF.

THE CITY WANTS TO MAKE HIM A HERO. THEY'RE DESPERATE FOR GRUNDY TO SURVIVE SO THEY CAN HONOR HIM.

I...I HATE TO SOUND CALLOUS, BUT WHAT IF GRUNDY DOES DIE? WOULDN'T THAT BE BETTER? EASIER? HE'LL BE REBORN AGAIN, ANYWAY.

NO, IF THIS GRUNDY IS THE ONE WE WANT, THEN THIS IS THE ONE WE SAVE.

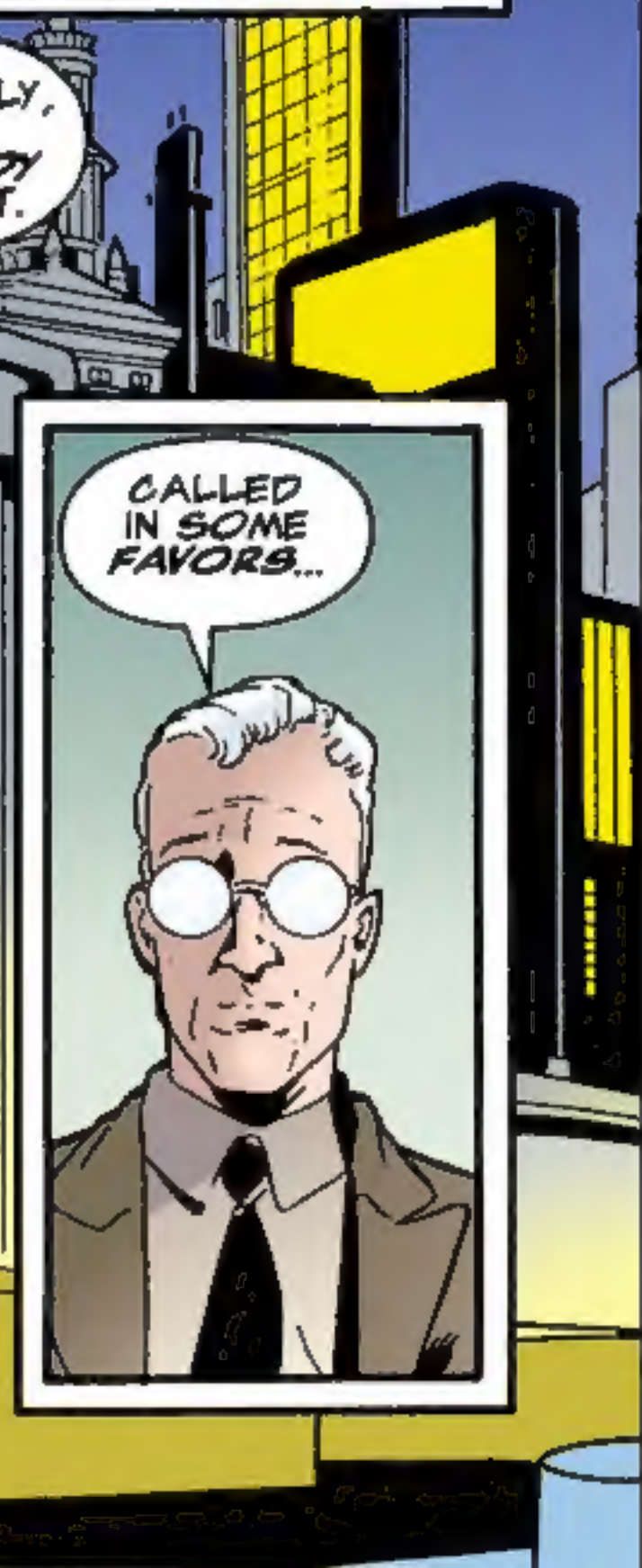
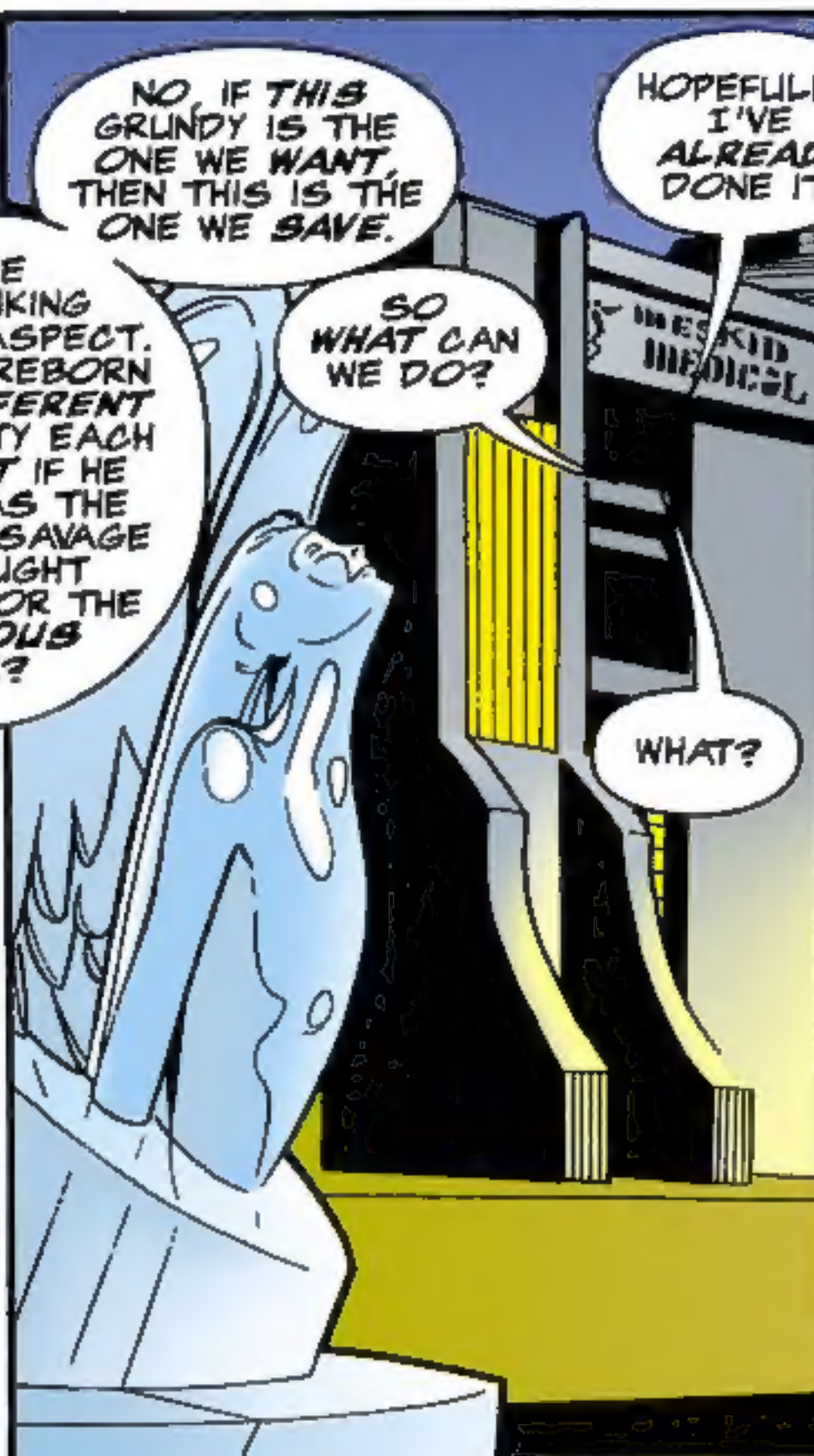
HOPEFULLY, I'VE ALREADY DONE IT.

YOU'RE NOT THINKING OF EVERY ASPECT. GRUNDY IS REBORN WITH A DIFFERENT PERSONALITY EACH TIME. WHAT IF HE RETURNS AS THE MINDLESS SAVAGE THAT FOUGHT BATMAN? OR THE MURDEROUS KILLER?

SO WHAT CAN WE DO?

WHAT?

CALLED IN SOME FAVORS...







"...CALLED IN  
SOME  
FRIENDS."

HE WAS  
THEIR BEST.

THEIR  
BRIGHTEST.

BUT AS THE SPENT  
YEARS FLED, SO THE  
HERO'S LIGHT BEGAN  
TO EBB. AND OTHER  
HEROES CAME, AND HE  
WAS NO LONGER YOUNG  
ENOUGH TO BE THE  
BEST AMONG THEM.

THAT ALL  
CHANGED  
RECENTLY.

## An Infernal Devices Interlude "WITH SOME HELP FROM HIS FRIENDS"

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ALAN.

I'M GLAD  
YOU COULD  
COME.

SINCE  
WHEN HAVE  
YOU EVER  
HAD TO  
WORRY I  
WOULDN'T?





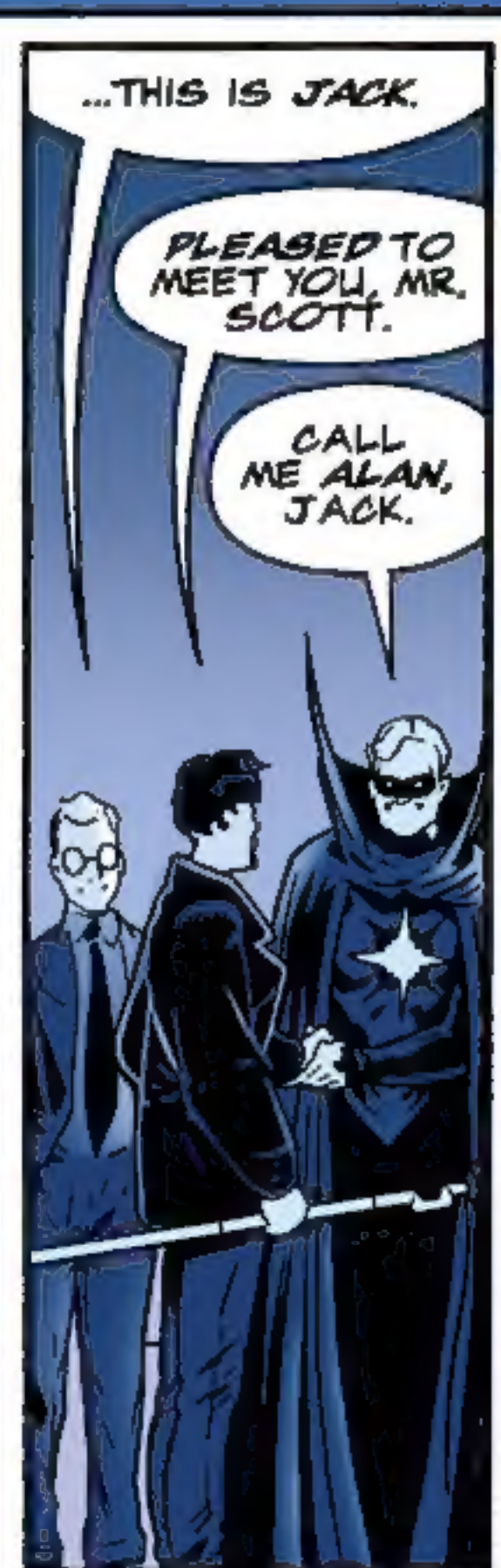
YOU LOOK SO...  
...YOUNG.



YES, TED. I'M BORRY.

FOR WHAT? I'M GLAD. GLAD ONE OF US IS ABLE TO SHOW THIS NEW CROWD HOW IT'S DONE.

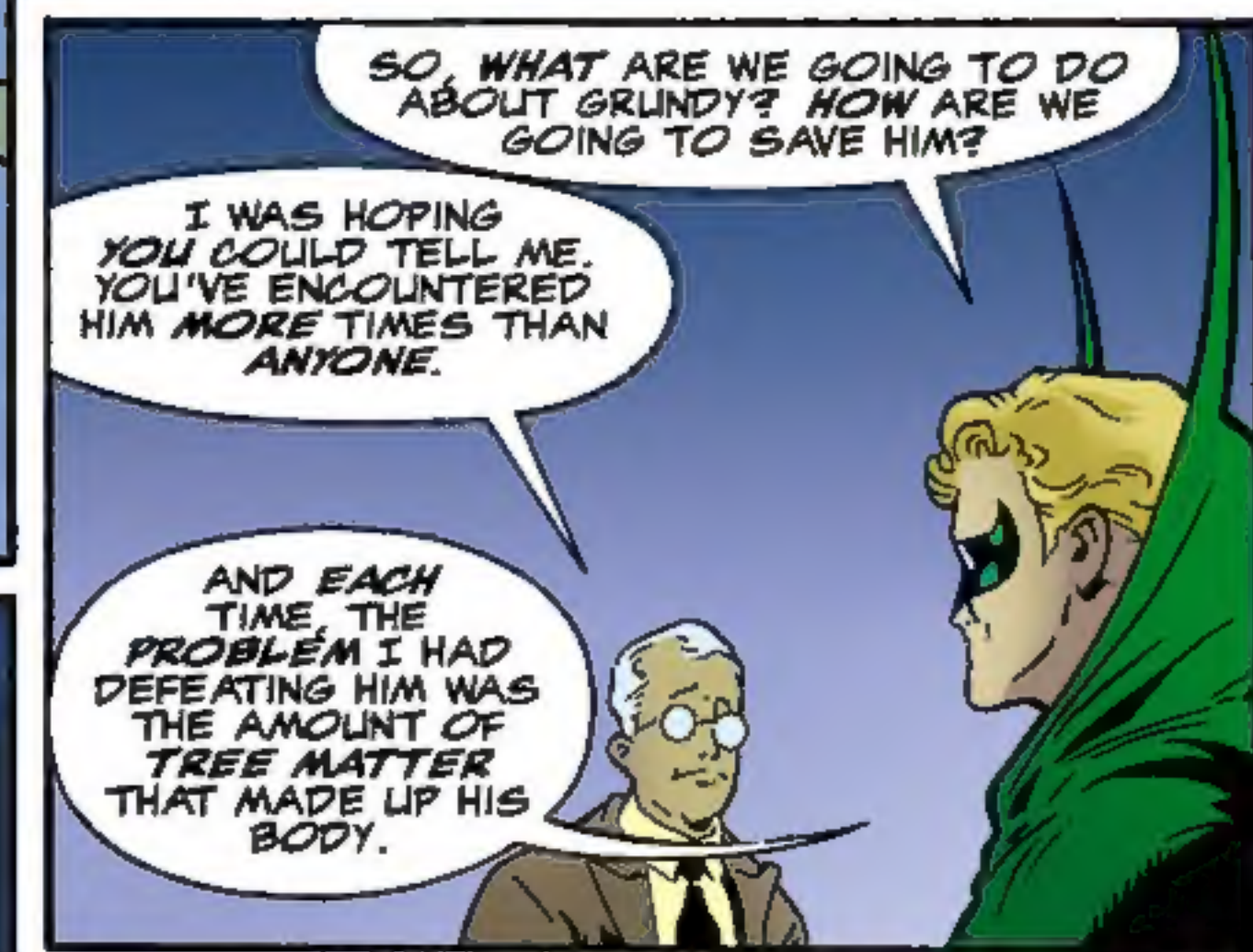
AND SPEAKING OF THE NEW CROWD...



...THIS IS JACK.

PLEASUED TO MEET YOU, MR. SCOTT.

CALL ME ALAN, JACK.



SO, WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO ABOUT GRUNDY? HOW ARE WE GOING TO SAVE HIM?

I WAS HOPING YOU COULD TELL ME. YOU'VE ENCOUNTERED HIM MORE TIMES THAN ANYONE.

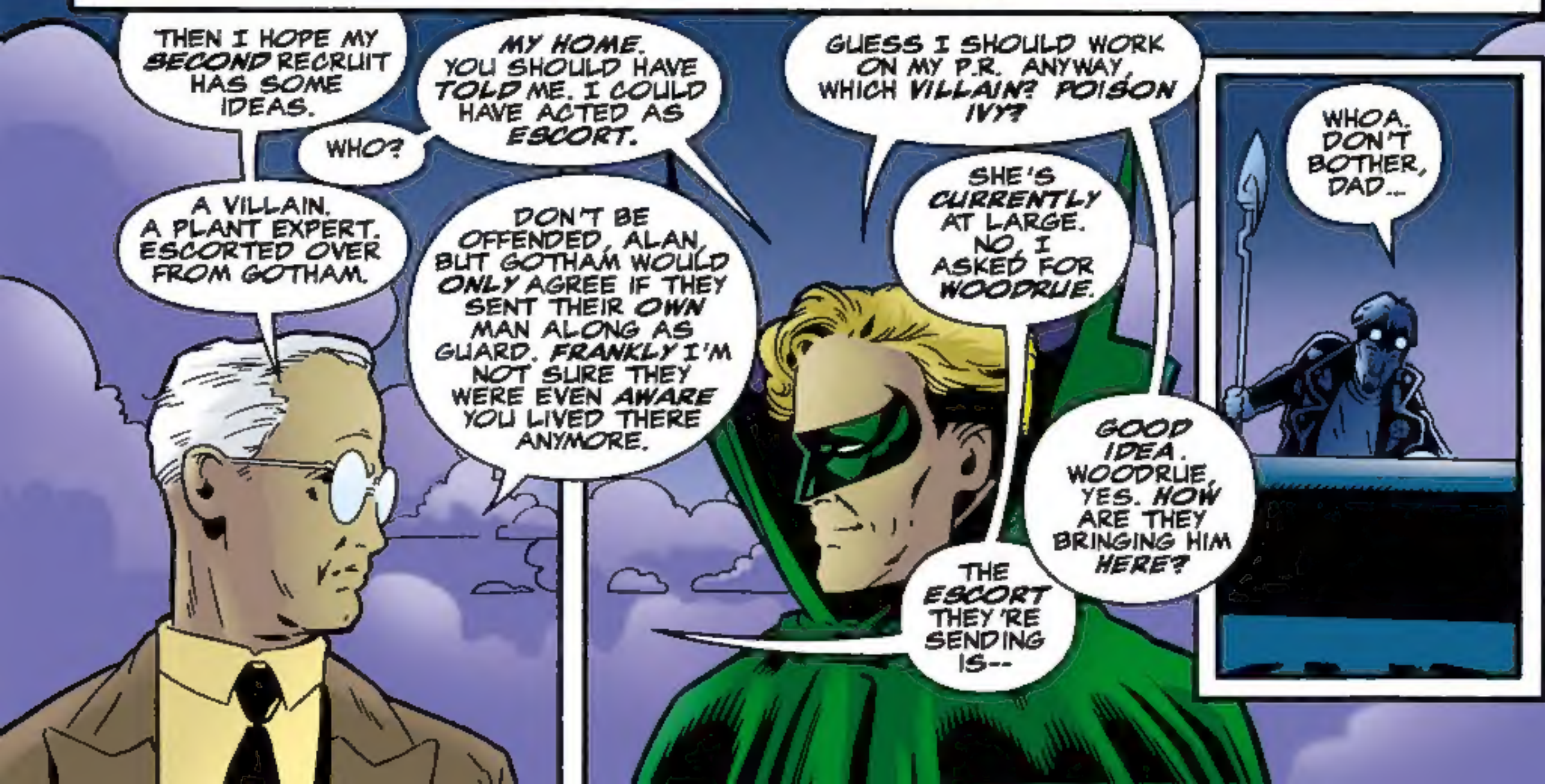
AND EACH TIME THE PROBLEM I HAD DEFEATING HIM WAS THE AMOUNT OF TREE MATTER THAT MADE UP HIS BODY.



TREE?

WOOD, JACK. WHEN I WAS GREEN LANTERN IT WAS MY ONE VULNERABILITY. IT PREVENTED ME FROM LEARNING TOO MUCH ABOUT GRUNDY.

...SO NOW, EVEN THOUGH MY POWERS HAVE CHANGED AND WOOD IS NO LONGER A PROBLEM, I'M NOT SURE WHAT MY POWERS COULD DO THAT MIGHT REVERSE GRUNDY'S ILLS.



THEN I HOPE MY SECOND RECRUIT HAS SOME IDEAS.

WHO?

A VILLAIN. A PLANT EXPERT. ESCORTED OVER FROM GOTHAM.

MY HOME. YOU SHOULD HAVE TOLD ME. I COULD HAVE ACTED AS ESCORT.

DON'T BE OFFENDED, ALAN, BUT GOTHAM WOULD ONLY AGREE IF THEY SENT THEIR OWN MAN ALONG AS GUARD. FRANKLY I'M NOT SURE THEY WERE EVEN AWARE YOU LIVED THERE ANYMORE.

GUESS I SHOULD WORK ON MY P.R. ANYWAY, WHICH VILLAIN? POISON IVY?

SHE'S CURRENTLY AT LARGE. NO I ASKED FOR WOODRUE.

GOOD IDEA. WOODRUE, YES. HOW ARE THEY BRINGING HIM HERE?

THE ESCORT THEY'RE SENDING IS--

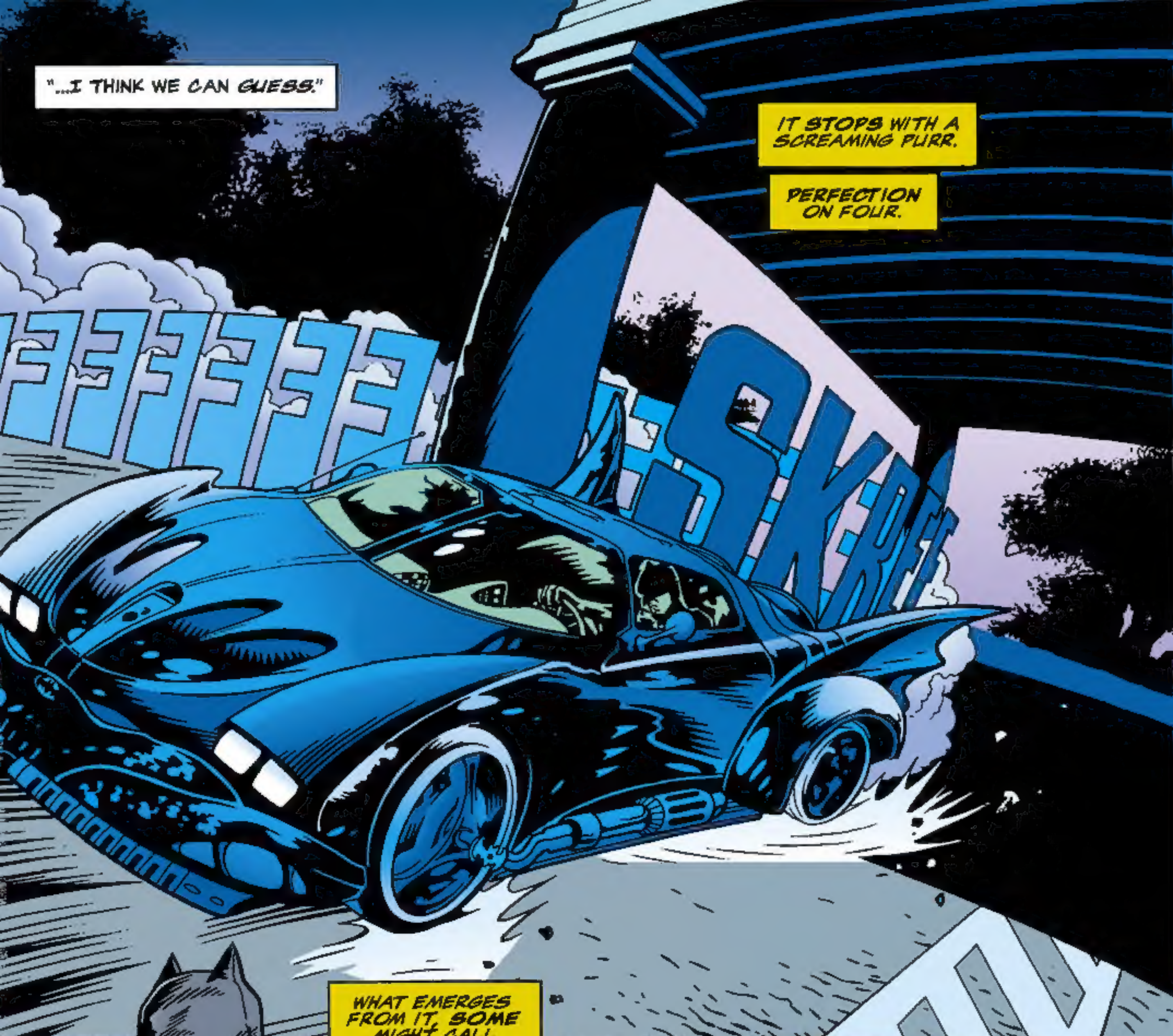
WHOA. DON'T BOTHER, DAD...



"...I THINK WE CAN GUESS."

IT STOPS WITH A SCREAMING PURR.

PERFECTION ON FOUR.



WHAT EMERGES FROM IT. SOME MIGHT CALL PERFECTION ON TWO.



BATMAN. I'M GLAD YOU COULD MAKE IT.

TED KNIGHT.

OTHERS WOULD CALL HIM TERROR WALKING. BUT THOSE WHO DO ARE SUPERSTITIOUS AND COWARDLY.



THE JOKER WAS GIVING ME SOME PROBLEMS. I THOUGHT I MIGHT HAVE TO GIVE NIGHTWING THE TASK OF BRINGING WOODRUE HERE.

SO, WHAT HAPPENED?

THE JOKER IS A PROBLEM NO LONGER.

THIS IS SENTINEL.

YES, WE'VE MET. I OPERATE IN GOTHAM, BATMAN. PERHAPS WE COULD COMPARE NOTES SOME TIME IN THE--

I WORK BEST ALONE.

WHICH WAY IS GRUNDY? TROUBLES IN GOTHAM AWAIT ME, GENTLEMEN. I'D LIKE THIS OVER AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

WOODRUE. I'D LIKE TO THANK YOU FOR AGREEING TO COME.

AS BATMAN NO DOUBT EXPLAINED I'M NOT REALLY IN MUCH OF A POSITION TO HELP YOU GET RELEASED, BUT I WILL MAKE SURE YOUR RECORD SHOWS HOW YOU HELPED US.

WOODRUE IS ALWAYS FREE. FREE INSIDE HIMSELF. WOODRUE IS HERE BECAUSE A BROTHER AILS.





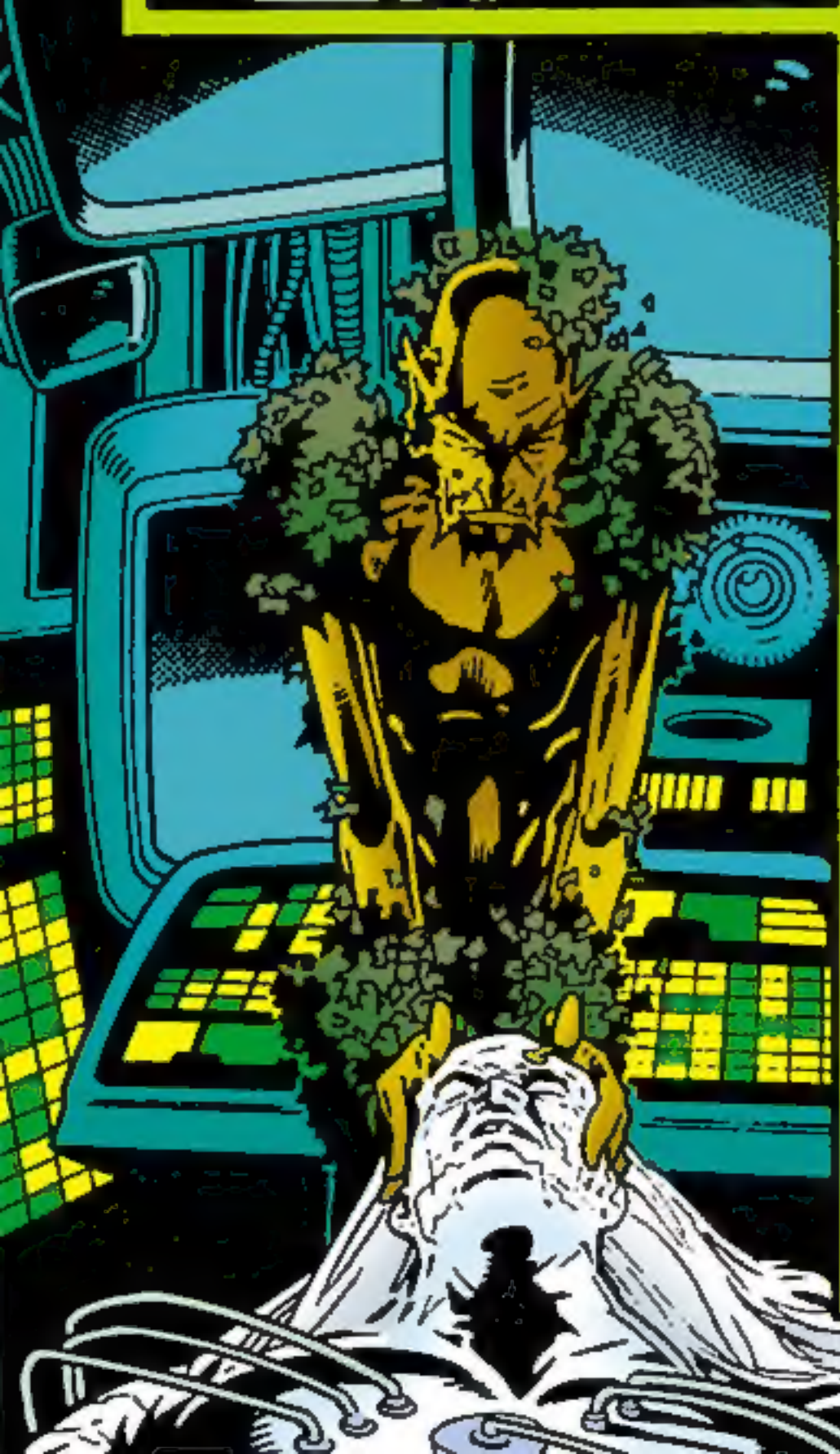
BROTHER?

BROTHER  
IN SUBSTANCE,  
BROTHER IN  
BEING THE  
GREEN. WE SHARE  
THIS AND IT  
MAKES US  
ONE.

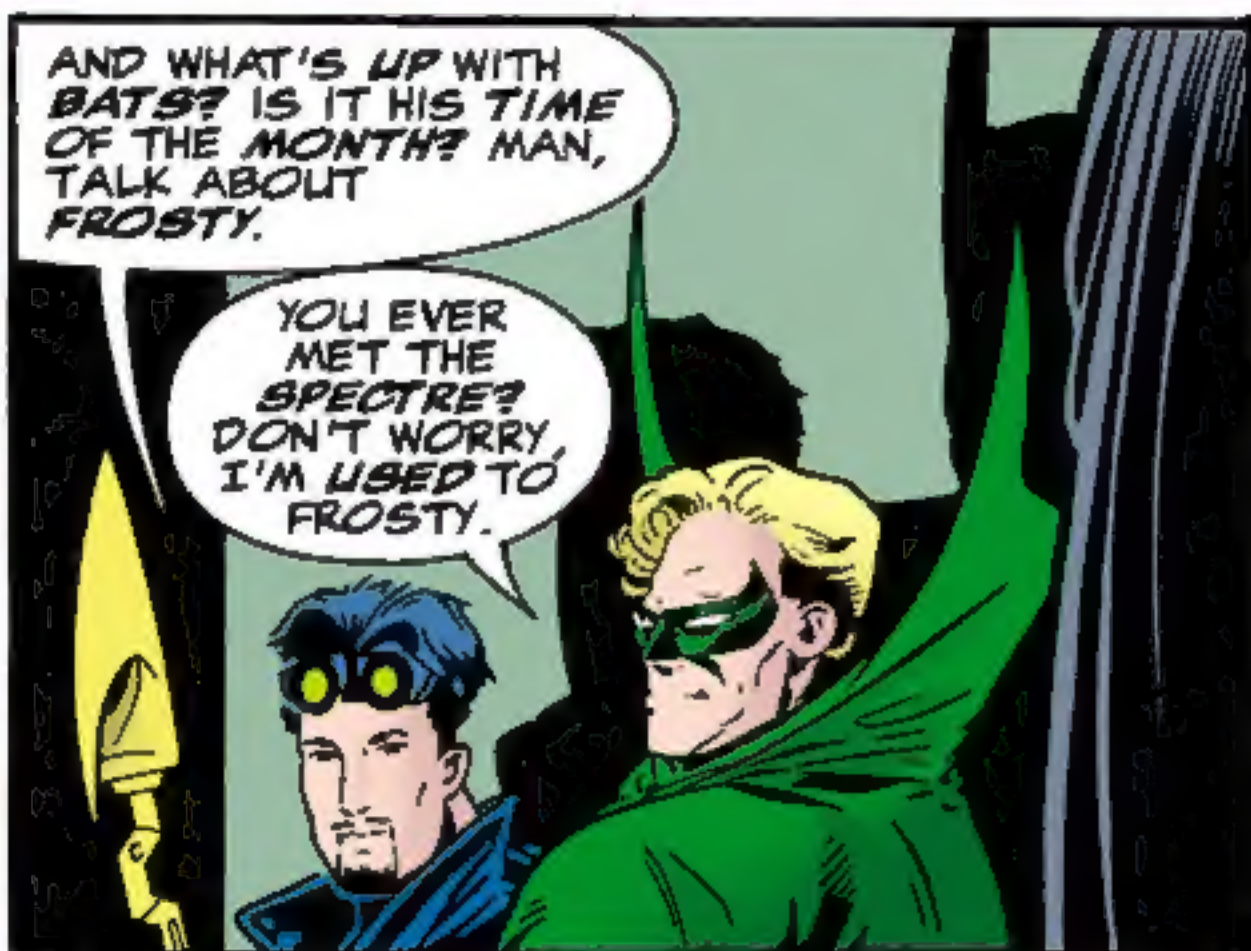
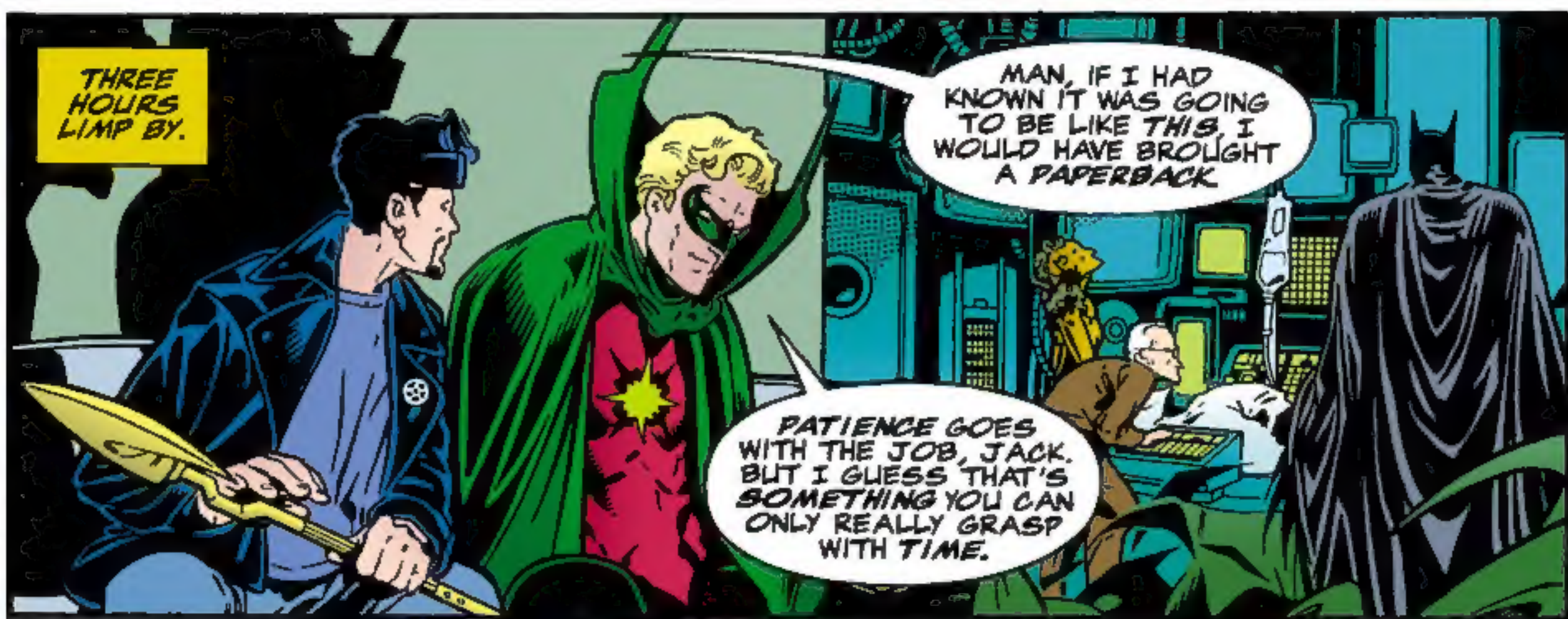
YOUR  
PHYSIOLOGY  
IS PLANT-  
FORM TOO.  
YOU AND GRUNDY  
ARE BOTH THAT  
WAY. THAT'S  
WHAT YOU'RE  
SAYING?

WOODRUE  
IS PURE GREEN.  
GRUNDY IS  
TAINTED WITH  
GRAY. BUT WE  
ARE ENOUGH  
AS ONE THAT  
WOODRUE  
CAME.

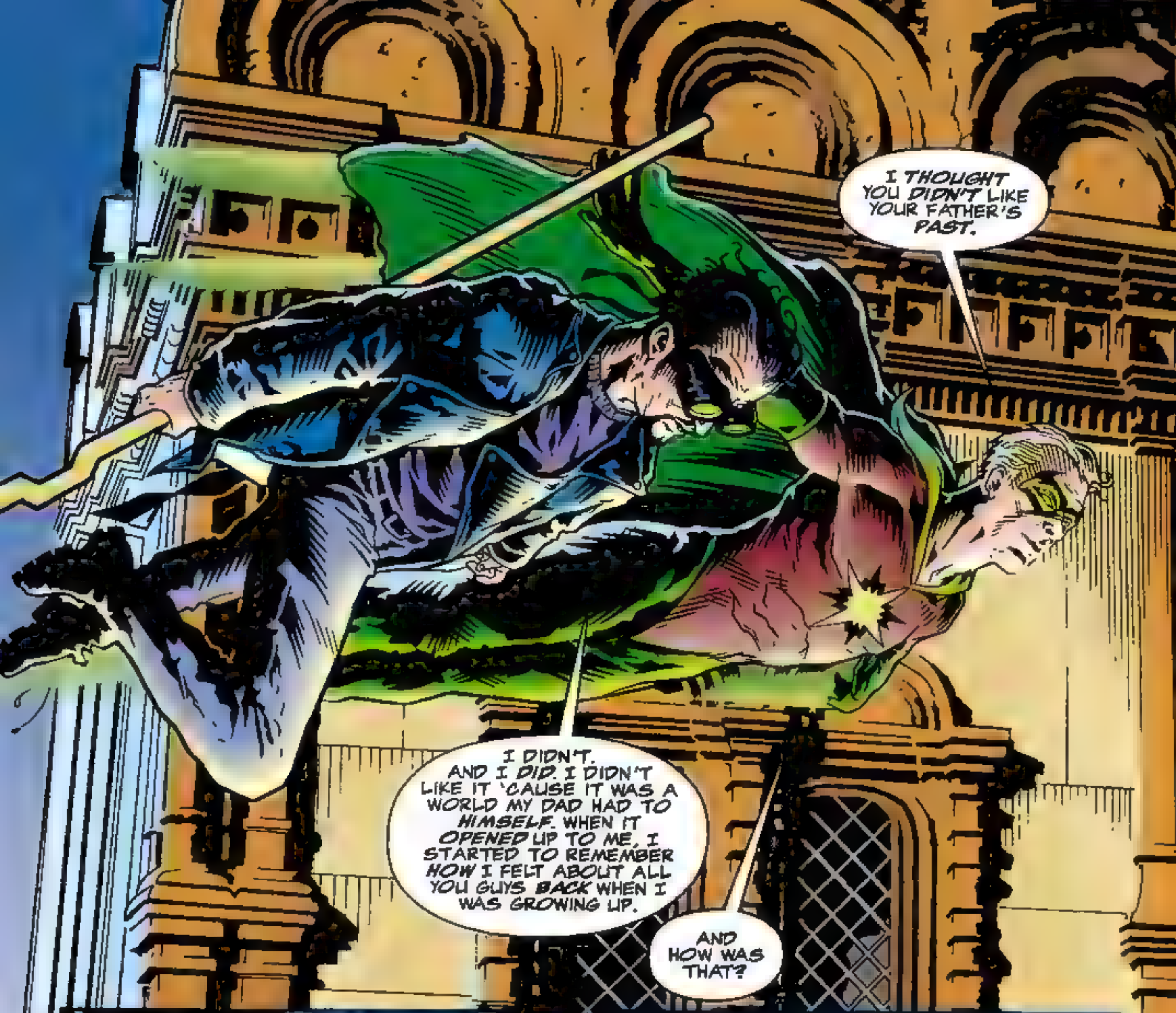
CAN  
YOU CURE  
HIM? CAN YOU  
HEAL HIM?  
CAN YOU  
DETERMINE  
THE CAUSE  
OF HIS  
INJURIES?











I THOUGHT  
YOU DIDN'T LIKE  
YOUR FATHER'S  
PAST.

I DIDN'T.  
AND I DID. I DIDN'T  
LIKE IT 'CAUSE IT WAS A  
WORLD MY DAD HAD TO  
HIMSELF. WHEN IT  
OPENED UP TO ME, I  
STARTED TO REMEMBER  
HOW I FELT ABOUT ALL  
YOU GUYS BACK WHEN I  
WAS GROWING UP.

AND  
HOW WAS  
THAT?

I  
MET WESLEY  
DODDS A WHILE  
BACK.

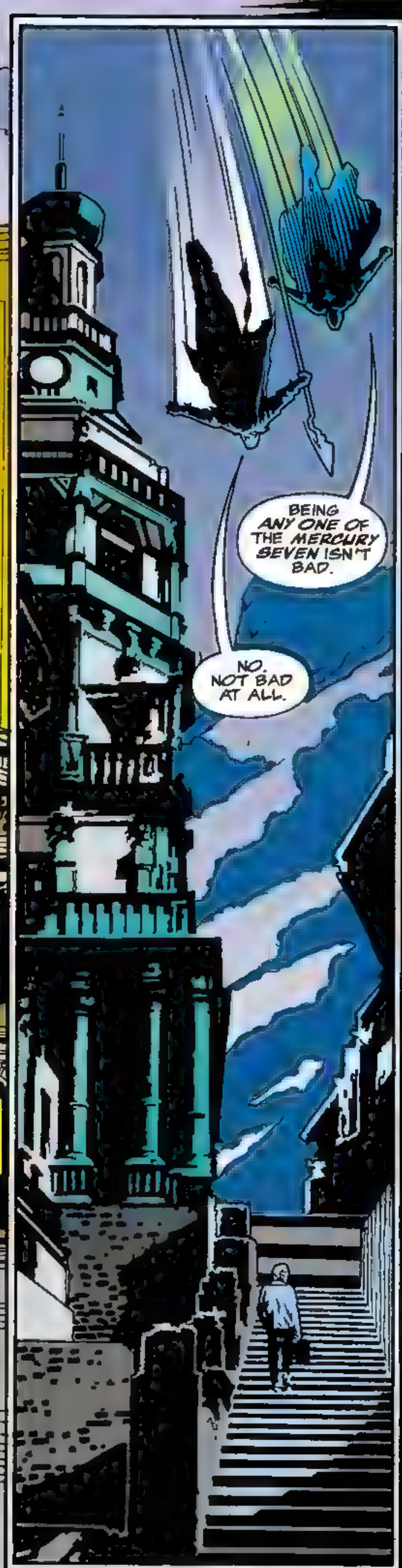
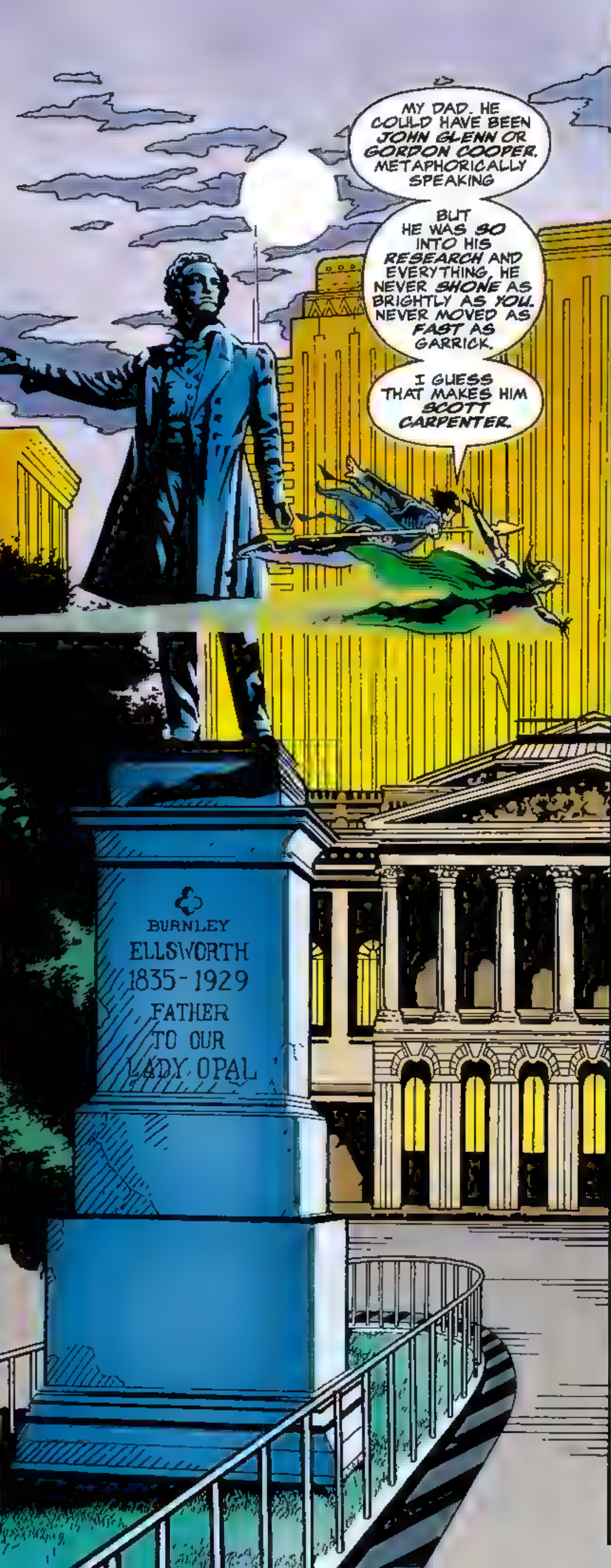
HE'S A  
WONDERFUL  
MAN. I SHALL  
MISS HIM.



AND WHAT  
ABOUT YOUR  
FATHER?

ME, TOO.  
THING IS, IF HE'S  
LINDBERGH, THEN  
YOU'RE CHUCK  
YEAGER.









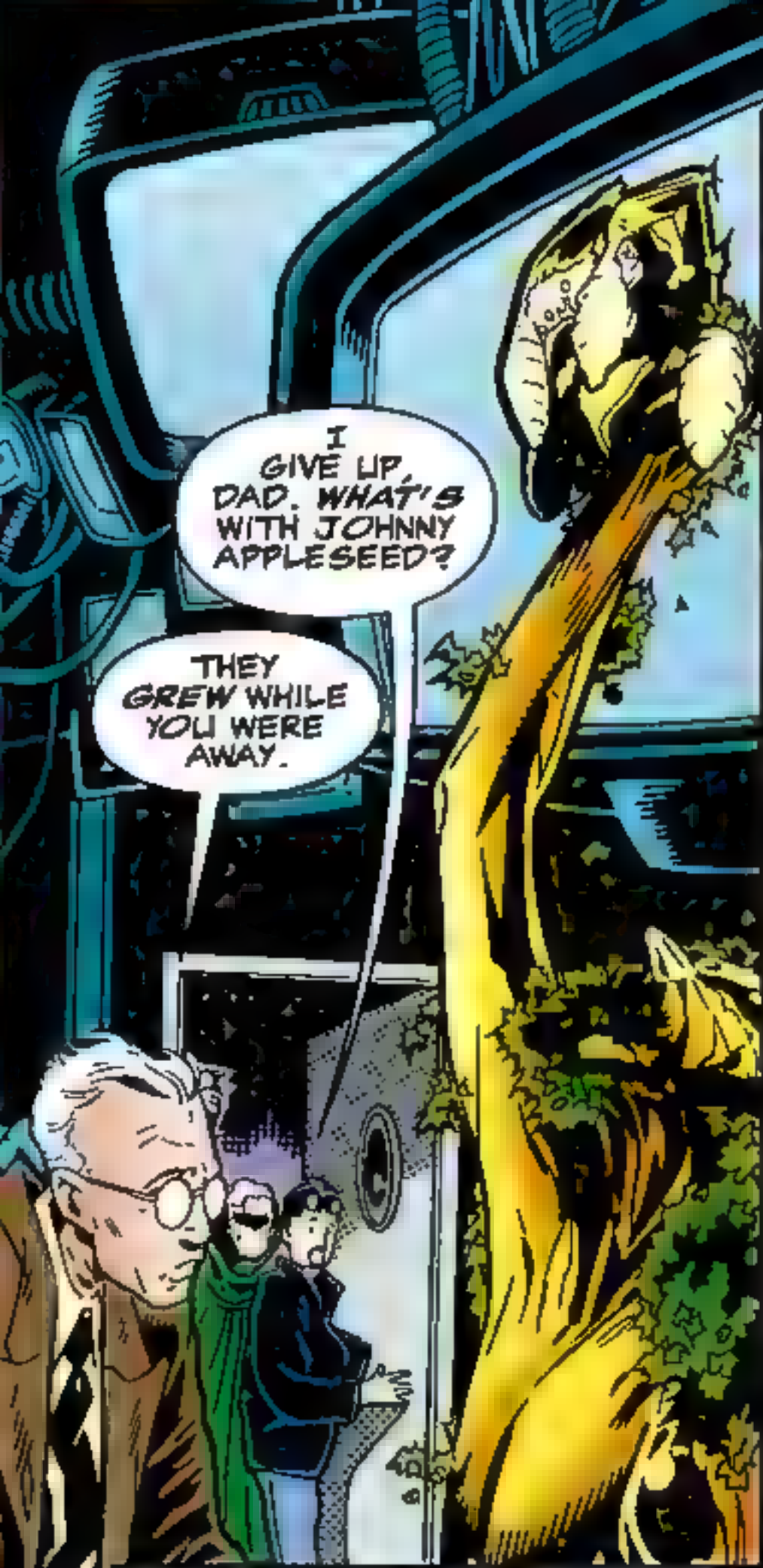
YOU'RE  
INTERESTED IN  
AVIATION AND  
SPACE  
TRAVEL?

WHAT CAN I  
TELL YOU? EACH DAY  
I SURPRISE MYSELF BY  
HOW MUCH THE SON  
OF MY FATHER I  
ACTUALLY AM.

I  
THINK WE'D  
BETTER GET  
BACK.

YEAH.





I GIVE UP, DAD. WHAT'S WITH JOHNNY APPLESEED?

THEY GREW WHILE YOU WERE AWAY.



GREAT, SO WHAT DO WE DO WITH THEM?

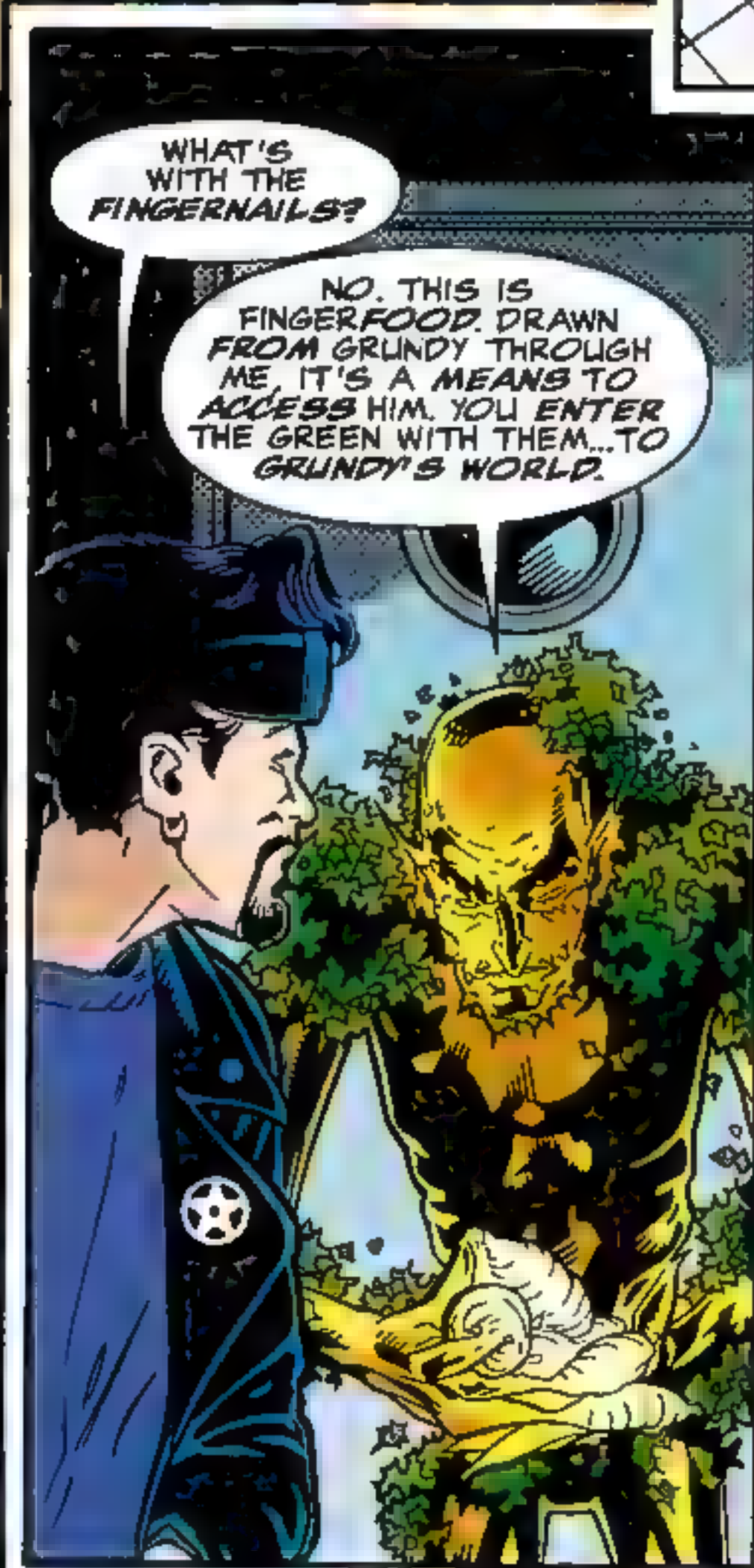
I WOULD SUGGEST WE CONTINUE TO WAIT...



...SOONER OR LATER WOODRUE WILL SNAP OUT OF IT.



WOODRUE HAS.



WHAT'S WITH THE FINGERNAILS?

NO. THIS IS FINGERFOOD. DRAWN FROM GRUNDY THROUGH ME, IT'S A MEANS TO ACCESS HIM. YOU ENTER THE GREEN WITH THEM... TO GRUNDY'S WORLD.

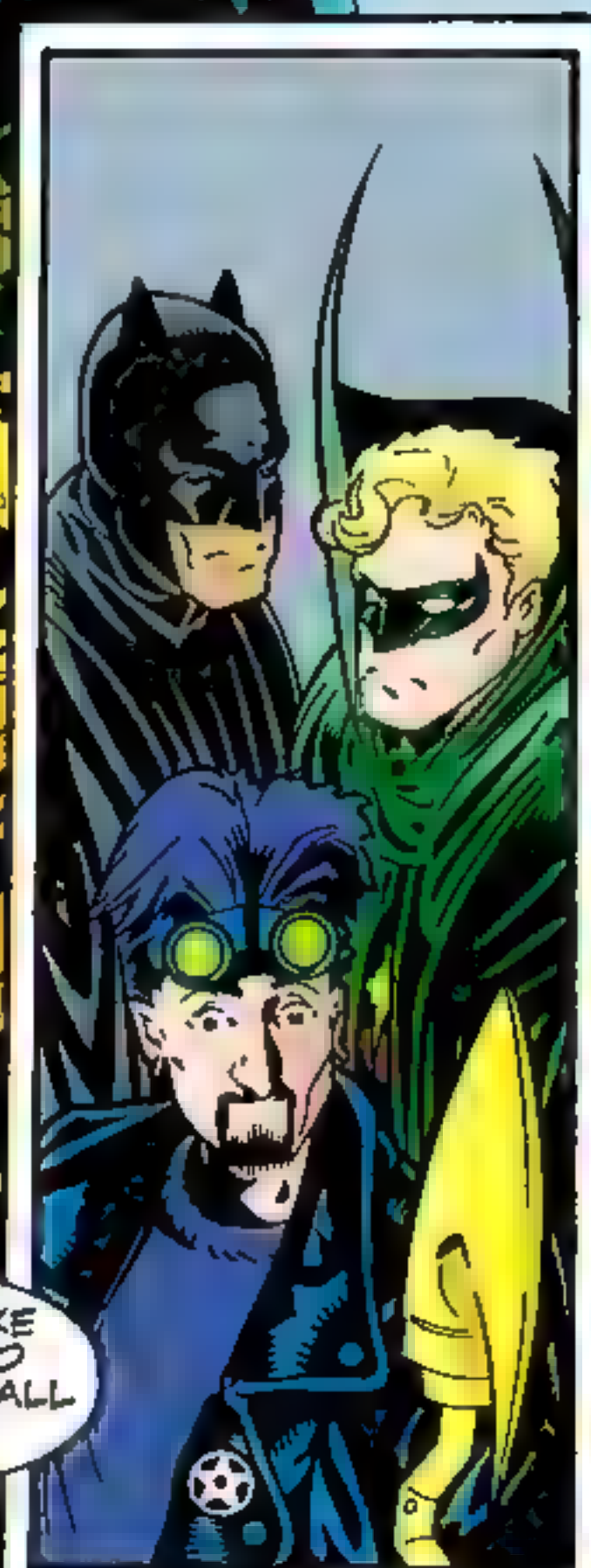


GRUNDY'S WORLD?

EAT AND BE WITHIN HIM. TOGETHER WITHIN.

AND THEN, YOU FIGHT WHAT AILS...

...YOU MAKE IT DIE SO GRUNDY SHALL LIVE.





SO FROM WHAT I CAN WORK OUT, WE EAT THESE FRUITS AND OUR COLLECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS ENTERS THE WORLD THAT THE FRUIT GREW FROM.

BUT YOUR BODIES STAY HERE?

IT'S NOT LIKE YOU VANISH OR ANYTHING, NO. IT'S MORE METAPHYSICAL. IT'S LIKE WE'RE SUDDENLY THE SUPERHERO VERSION OF KESEY'S MERRY FRANKSTERS.

ANYWAY, THERE IS AN ELEMENT OF DANGER TO THIS.

OUR MINDS ARE AT RISK. OUR MINDS GOVERN BODILY REACTIONS. SO IF WE GET HURT IN THE GRUNDY WORLD, I DON'T KNOW IF WE'LL BE PHYSICALLY HURT IN THIS ONE. BUT...

...IF WE DIE THERE, OUR MINDS WILL TURN OFF. WE'LL DIE IN REALITY, TOO.

YOU HAVE TO GO?

GRUNDY SAVED ME. NOW IT'S MY TURN.

WOODRUE, SENTINEL AND BATMAN ARE COMING WITH ME. WOODRUE GREW A TUBER FOR MY DAD TOO, BUT WE ALL FEEL HE'S OF MORE USE HERE, MONITORING OUR BODIES.

WHY DID THE OTHERS AGREE TO SUCH A WEIRD DANGEROUS GIG?

WOODRUE SEES IT AS A BROTHERLY ACT. SENTINEL HAS BEEN GRUNDY'S ENEMY FOR 50 YEARS. GRUNDY WILL BE REBORN EVENTUALLY IF THIS VERSION DIES. SENTINEL WOULD RATHER THIS KINDER, GENTLER GRUNDY STAYED AROUND.

AND BATMAN?

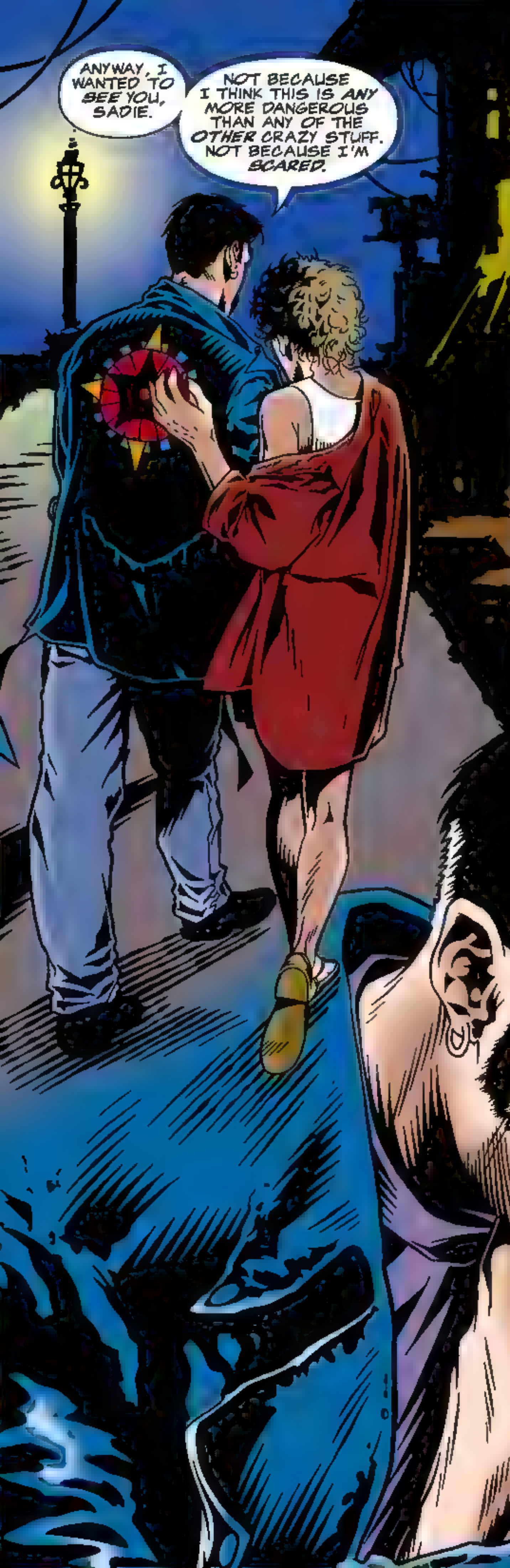
BATMAN? HE SEEMS SO WRAPPED UP IN HIS DARK, DIRE PERSONA... TAKES HIMSELF SO SERIOUSLY. HE IS EVERYTHING I HATE ABOUT TODAY'S HEROES.

BUT I GUESS UNDERNEATH IT ALL HE'S A GOOD MAN.

MAYBE YOU MISJUDGED HIM.

MAYBE I DID.





ANYWAY, I  
WANTED TO  
SEE YOU,  
SADIE.

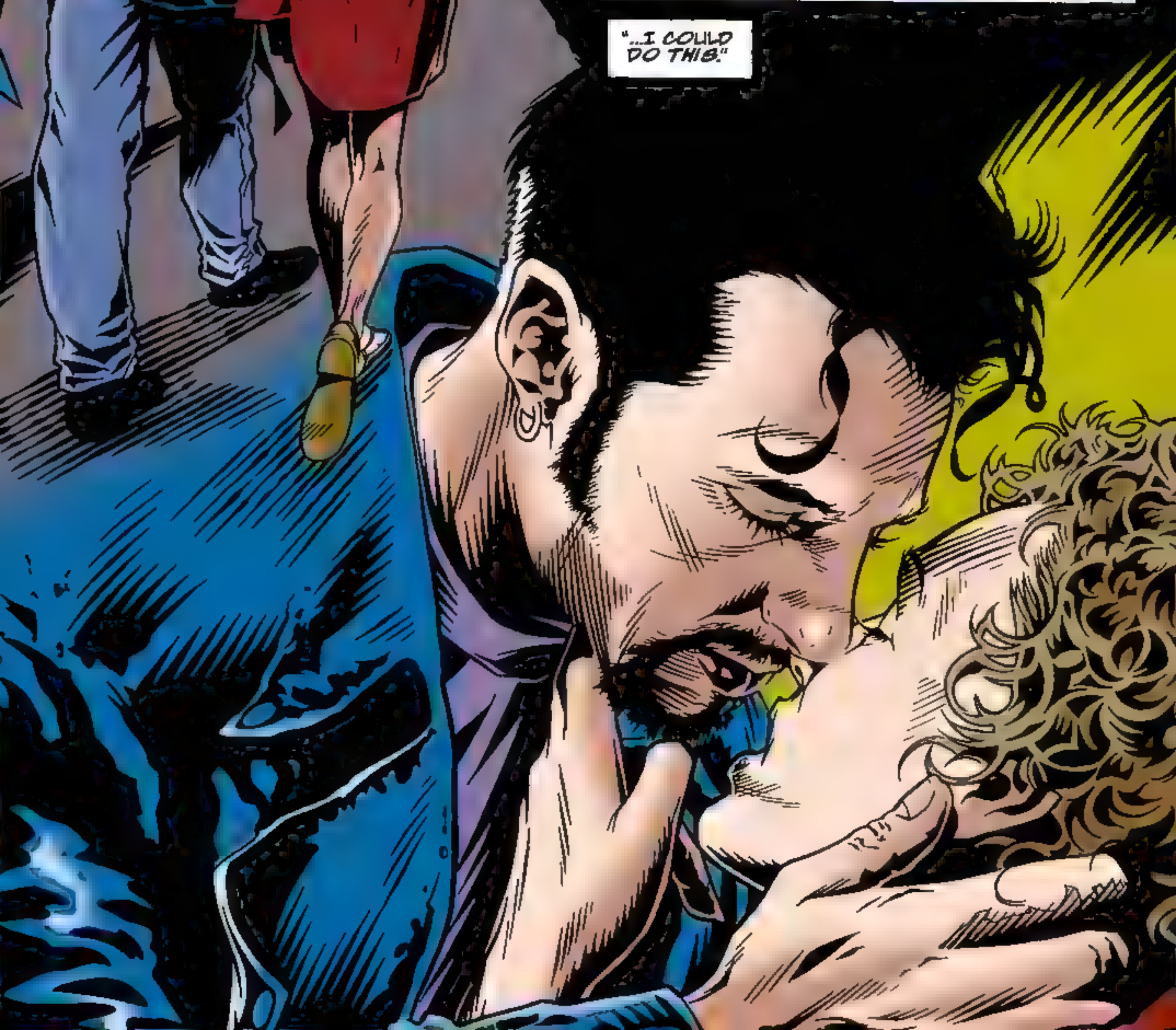
NOT BECAUSE  
I THINK THIS IS ANY  
MORE DANGEROUS  
THAN ANY OF THE  
OTHER CRAZY STUFF.  
NOT BECAUSE I'M  
SCARED.



THEN WHY?

SO  
BEFORE  
I DID  
THAT...

"...I COULD  
DO THIS."







ARE WE READY?

TO EAT STRANGE FRUIT GROWN FROM A PLANT MAN'S FINGERS SO WE CAN TAKE A COMMUNAL "TRIP" INTO THE WORLD OF GRUNDY?

MAN, THERE ISN'T A DAY I HAVEN'T BEEN READY.



LESS TALK, MORE ACTION. YOU WANT TO USE YOUR MOUTH FOR SOMETHING...



...TAKE A BITE.



TO ALAN SCOTT IT TASTES OF APPLES AND CINNAMON. THE FAIRGROUND APPLE PIES OF HIS MID-WESTERN CHILDHOOD.

TO JACK IT TASTES OF RASPBERRY ESSENCE. THE KIND HE PUTS IN COFFEE. THEN THE TASTE SHIFTS ON HIS TONGUE AND BECOMES THE SWEETNESS OF ITALIAN DESSERT WINE, RICH WITH NOBLE ROT.

WOODRUE TASTES THE SAVORY UNDER-SIDE OF ELM BARK.

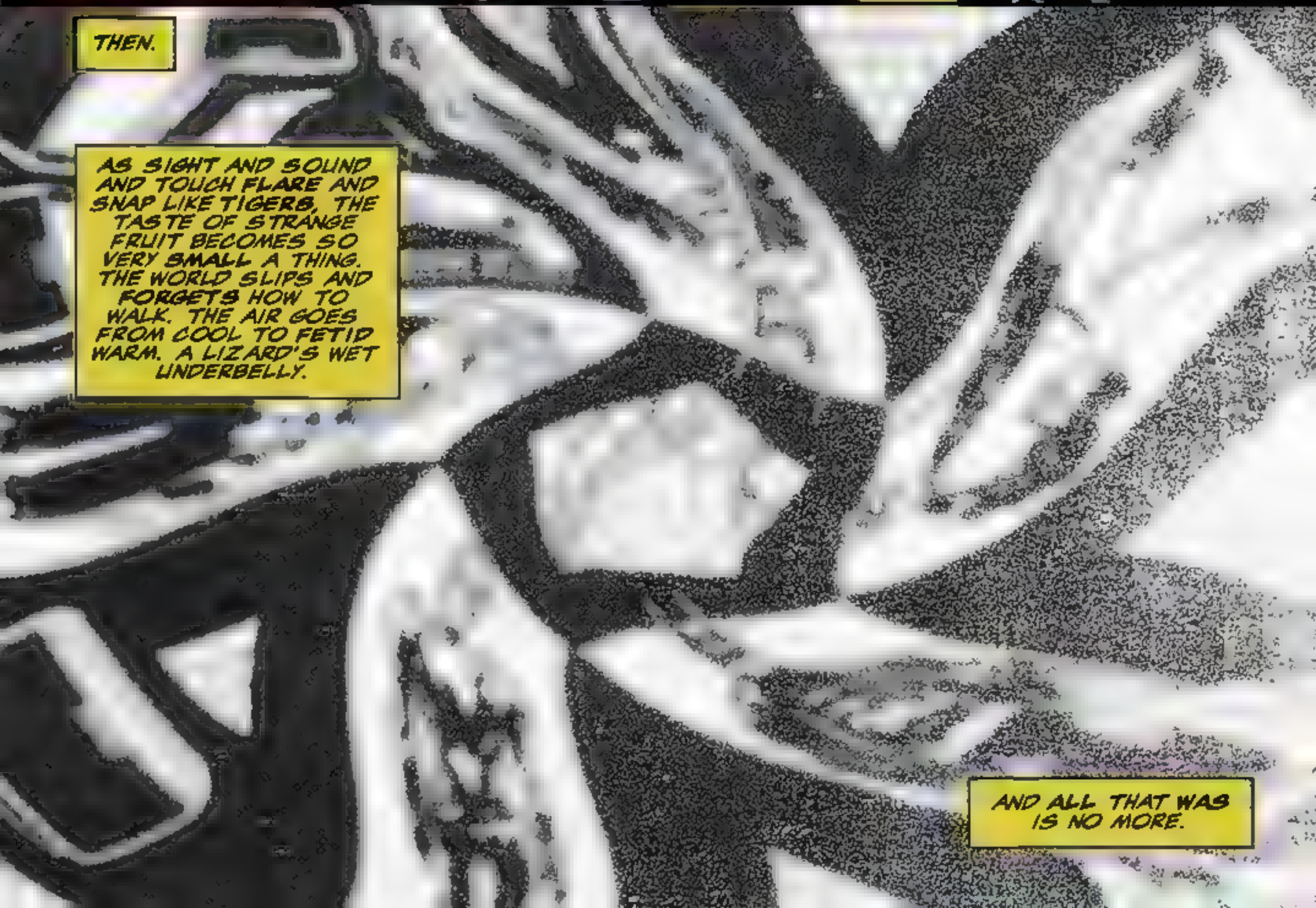
BATMAN TASTES NOTHING AT ALL.



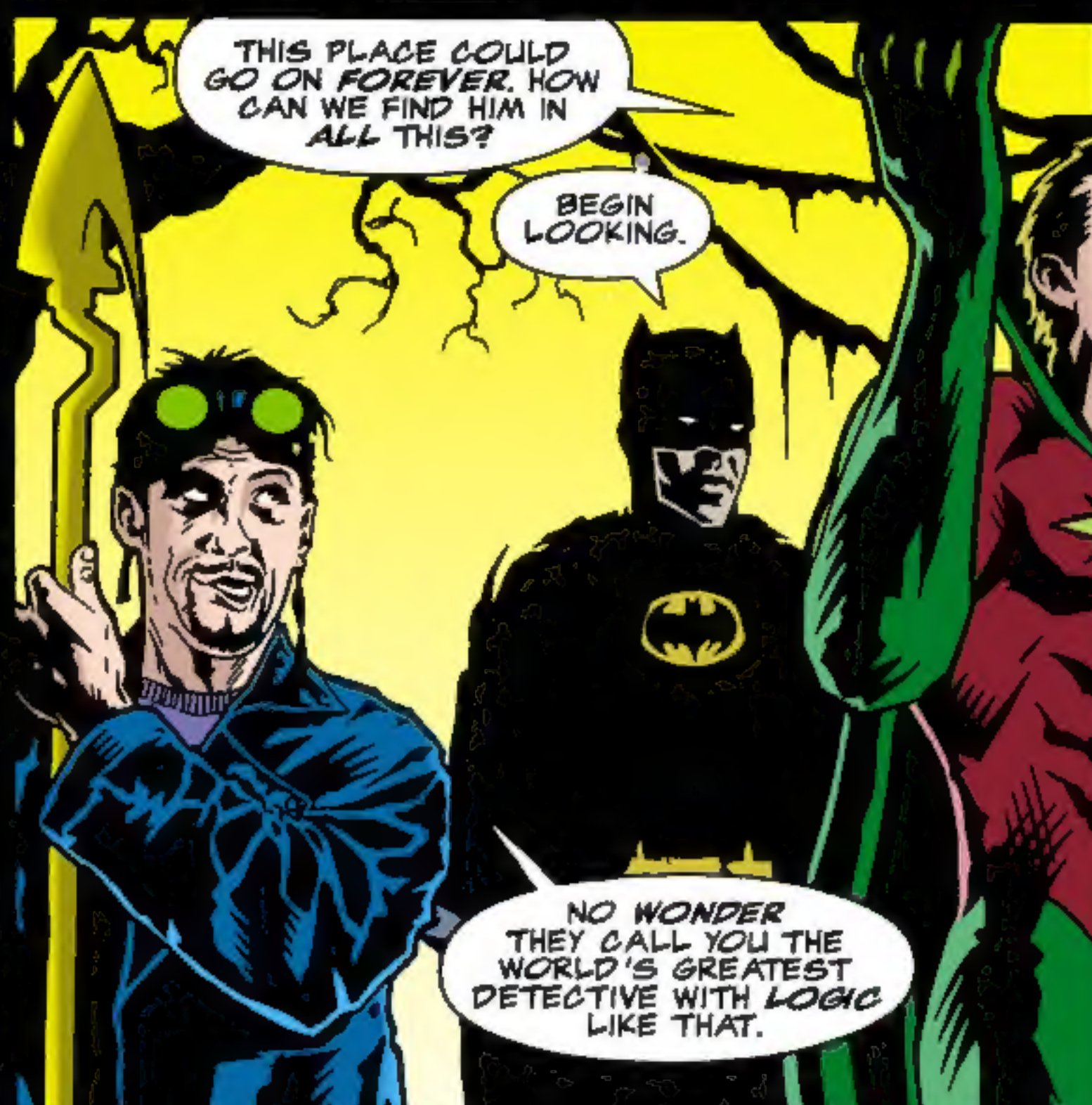
THEN.

AS SIGHT AND SOUND AND TOUCH FLARE AND SNAP LIKE TIGERS, THE TASTE OF STRANGE FRUIT BECOMES SO VERY SMALL A THING. THE WORLD SLIPS AND FORGETS HOW TO WALK. THE AIR GOES FROM COOL TO FETID WARM. A LIZARD'S WET UNDERBELLY.

AND ALL THAT WAS IS NO MORE.











YOUR JOKES AREN'T FUNNY. YOU WANT TO WALK THE DARK PATH I TAKE, THERE'S NO PLACE FOR HUMOR.

JEEZ. CHILL OUT.



YES, BATMAN. I DON'T LIKE YOUR TONE.

AND I'M NOT SURE I LIKE YOURS.



WHOA. HEY, YOU WANNA BE DOWN ON ME FOR MAKING FUN OF YOU, FINE.

BUT DON'T YOU DARE TALK TO THIS MAN THAT WAY. YOU MAY BE MR. HOTSHOT, BIG NAME HERO NOW, BUT NOTHING YOU'VE DONE MAKES YOU WORTHY OF KISSING THE HEM OF THIS MAN'S CAPE, FRIEND.

YOU MAY THINK YOU'RE THE DARK, COOL, GRIM HERO. ME, I SEE ANOTHER IDIOT RUNNING AROUND WITH HIS UNDERWEAR OVER HIS LONGJOHNS. YOU'RE EVERYTHING I DON'T WANT TO BE.



I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU WANT OR THINK OR DO.

THEN MAYBE YOU SHOULD START.



NO, MAYBE I SHOULD KNOCK SOME SENSE--

FUNNY.



GROWN MEN, COME HERE FOR GRUNDY LITE, AND THEY CAN'T EVEN WALK AND TALK IN ACCORD.

YOU HAVEN'T GOT A PRAYER. EVEN IF YOU COULD WORK AS A TEAM, THERE'S ONLY FOUR OF YOU...





...AND THERE ARE OH, SO MANY MORE OF US.

TO BE CONTINUED



# Deadman Wade

"THIS IS WHAT  
AWESOME  
LOOKS LIKE".

DCP